



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

❖THE❖OLD❖TESTAMENT❖STUDENT.❖

VOL. VII.

MARCH, 1888.

NO. 7.

AS those who make use of the "Inductive Bible-studies" must have observed, the question of harmonizing the dates and numbers of Scripture with those of outside writers is a difficult and serious one. No more plausible or satisfactory theory of such a harmony has, in our opinion, been presented than that which Professor Willis J. Beecher has given in these "studies." It is probable that only a few of the thousands who are carrying on this course of studies have patiently and thoroughly investigated the case as presented. The majority of people detest chronology. But what has been the result in the case of the few who have considered the matter? What inference may be drawn from the manner in which our instructor, Professor Beecher himself, presents the case? Is the question yet solved? Turn from this simple and comparatively satisfactory representation, to the wearisome, complex, and (shall we say?) imaginary theory advanced in the last *Bibliotheca Sacra*. Pass in review the countless schemes which from generation to generation have appeared. What must we conclude? That, at all events, the case is doubtful. Perhaps no more interesting collection could be made than that of the forced interpretations which have been offered in order to maintain the strict accuracy of the biblical numerals in certain passages. Every *honest* effort, we feel, should be made to prove, if possible, the universal accuracy of the numbers given in Scripture; but there are two things which may well be kept in mind: (1) that it is better to acknowledge the existence of an error here or there, than to resort to means perhaps dishonest, and certainly in many cases absurd, to disprove it; (2) that the acknowledgment of a numerical error is, after all, not so serious as would at first sight appear.

THE article of the Rev. Wilbur F. Crafts, published in this number, will surprise some, discourage others. It should not, however, occasion either surprise or discouragement. It is only what one who stops for a moment to think, would beforehand have predicted.

The present Sunday-school methods, however admirable, and however efficient in other regards, do not, in the line of Bible instruction, produce the desired results.

But with no other comment here, we would take this opportunity to enter a protest against the importance attached by Mr. Crafts to the memorizing of the exact words of Scripture. Just as in many cases, children learn the sound of an expression, with no idea whatever of the separate words, so both children and adults often learn the words of an expression, with no idea whatever of the meaning. Now certainly the thought is more important than the words; the spirit, than the letter. A poor statement of a grammatical principle, or of the thought of a given verse, if in the language of the pupil himself, is far better than a word-for-word recitation of the statement contained in the grammar, or of the verse as it is in Scripture, *unless* the student has thoroughly digested the latter; and this not one student in fifty ever does. It may be said that this, though true of human writings, is not true of the divine words. To this we cannot give assent. The fact that sacred writers, when narrating the same event, often differ widely from each other in the words employed, is in itself evidence in favor of this position. If Mr. Crafts will substitute "mastery" for "memorize," if our schools will do the same, the results will be different. There was a time when children merely "memorized;" that time is past, and we hope will never come again. The watchword of the future should be and will be "mastery." No greater mistake has prevailed in the educational work of the past than the idea that "memorizing" means "learning."

ANOTHER word about "memorizing" Scripture. Many of us, doubtless, look back with satisfaction to that good old time, when, even against our will, we memorized Scripture; and naturally such ask, Is there anyone so foolish, so weak, as to cry out against this? Two points are worthy of notice: (1) Is it necessary to go far, in order to ascertain the result of a too strict adherence to the *word*? Do we not see this, clearly, in the conceptions of Scripture current in our Saviour's time? This state of things was the natural, indeed the inevitable, outcome of the method of Scripture-study employed in the preceding generations. (2) "Memorizing" is far better than nothing; and the result, so far as knowledge of the Bible is concerned, of much of the Bible-study of to-day is *nothing*. If no better plan can be devised, let us go back to "memorizing," for all will agree that, in many cases, "memorizing" was really valuable. But, just as "memorizing"

words, even with no adequate conception of their meaning is better than nothing, so "mastery," which means far more than "memorizing," is superior to "memorizing." If, therefore, "mastery" is impossible, then "memorize;" but why should "mastery" *be* impossible?

THERE are two general theories in reference to the interpretation of Scripture. One insists that the sacred words may mean anything anywhere, that they may have two or more distinct meanings according to the option of the interpreter; the other, that an expression, allowing for difference of speaker, age and other attendant circumstances, has *one* meaning, and that determined by the context. Which is "scientific"? One theory insists that a people living before civilization began may have the same ideas concerning life, religion, and the future, which another people possess who live in the full blaze of the light of the risen Messiah; the other, that the religious conceptions of an early age, when compared with those of a later age, after making all needed allowance for the supernatural element, are necessarily dim, hazy, and incomplete. Which is "scientific"? One theory insists that the Bible, assumed to be of divine origin, differs so materially from all other writings, that in its study the ordinary principles of literary composition are to be cast aside as useless, even profane; the other, granting the divine origin, insists that, having likewise been written *by* men and *for* men, there are some aspects at least, in which it deserves to be treated as a *human production*, and that, so far, it is subject to the laws which regulate other human productions. Which is "scientific"? One theory insists that, being divine, it must *therefore* be thus or thus; the other, that, being thus and thus, it is divine. Which is "scientific"? We might go further; this will suffice. "Scientific" Bible-study *is* study in the process of which (1) scientific methods are employed; (2) adherence is maintained to the laws of human speech; (3) allowance is made for all the factors which enter into the problem under consideration; (4) the truth is sought, regardless of previous preconceptions. It is *not* study in the process of which (1) methods belonging to the dark ages are used; (2) the simplest laws of language are violated; (3) only facts favorable to the theory are considered, the others wrested or ignored; (4) a theory must be established, whether by fair or foul means.

It is noteworthy that the term "unscientific" is, in some particulars, as truly applicable to much of the so-called "advanced" criticism and exegesis of our day, as to the older and more staid criticism and exegesis, at which our "advanced" friends are so accustomed to sneer.